

Podcast 10 – Defiant Mother



I offer no apologies. I
am a defiant mother.

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Today’s podcast is a bit more personal than previous ones.

I offer no apologies. I am a defiant mother.

While raising my children, my thinking went something like this: If I was going to bring children into the world, I ought to be able to identify whether they were well or not.

In fact, not unlike any of you mothers reading this now, I checked my baby (who was generally in my arms anyway) pretty much by the minute so I felt pretty capable of conducting my own well baby check-ups.

I also read unceasingly.

Additionally, I put a lot of time into homemade, organic, pasture fed foods, so it seemed stupid (excuse the sophomoric word, but it’s so fitting!)

to forget all that when the baby got a common illness and defer to someone with whom I fundamentally disagreed.

I hate drugs, he loved 'em. Ultimately you have to be willing to buck the system. Listen to the podcast for more reasons why mothers need to be vigilant and defiant.

And why my parting word is NO!

You are listening to a podcast from JoetteCalabrese.com where nationally certified American homeopath, public speaker, and author, Joette Calabrese, shares her passion for helping families stay healthy through homeopathy and nutrient-dense nutrition.

Jendi: This is Jendi and I'm here with Joette Calabrese. Hello, Joette! How are you?

Joette: I'm doing well, Jendi. How about you?

Jendi: I am good. I am glad for a nice, sunshiny day today.

Joette: Finally.

Joette on pediatricians: "Yikes!"

Jendi: I've been looking at your site and I am particularly interested in how you raised your children. I know that your children are adults now and out of the house but my children are still at home and I am interested in learning how others who have already been through this did it successfully. So did you ever give your kids any medicine and what did your pediatrician think about this?

Joette: Well, for any mother, the most important aspect of their lives is, of course, their children. And then let me say most emphatically, pediatrician, yikes! I'm being a little flippant here but there's a measure of truth to my reaction. I didn't need a pediatrician. Those ubiquitous well-baby checkups were something I never bought into. Excuse my skepticism but they're just a calendar-building technique for an otherwise not very busy medical specialty. Perhaps they fulfill a need in mothers who don't trust knowing whether or not their children are well.

But I always felt that I was happy to buy things when I needed them but I don't really like to buy services and products that are redundant. And I found from years previous to having children and having been married to a doctor back in my 20s before I remarried and then had my children a decade later, you can learn a lot in a decade of going to doctors, that they're always looking for something to do. And I interpreted that something to do meant prescribing drugs or ordering tests and I was already clearly against that from the very onset.

How to Raise a Healthy Child in Spite of Your Doctor

I guess I don't care for nor do I trust drug fundamentalists and I prefer those who are looking to protect the sanctity of the human body and not taint it with questionable drugs, particularly during the susceptible years of childhood. And I think a drug fundamentalist is someone who says, "Ear infection? Oh, antibiotic. Eczema? Oh, steroid. Got a little issue here on your skin? Let's remove it." So the more I read, the more I found this medical specialty to be a disappointment.

I loved Dr. Robert Mendelsohn and his book, *How to Raise a Healthy Child in Spite of Your Doctor*. Love that book. So my thinking went something like this. If I was going to bring children into the world, I really ought to be able to identify whether or not they were well. In fact, not unlike any mother,

I checked my baby pretty much by the minute because they were always in my arms when they were babies. And when they weren't and they were at my feet as I was doing my work around the house, I felt pretty capable of knowing what was going on with my children. I knew when they were sick. And I felt and still feel that common horse sense that what I was applying trumped any pediatric drug-laden scheme every time.

Jendi: I personally really like this kind of thinking but it seems like it's hard to carry out and there's a lot of fear around mothers today when we hear about the medical community coming and taking the kids and it just seems like the fear takes away the confidence and it's hard to rely on yourself as the mother.

Joette: Yeah. Well, I think we should be getting our PhD in mothering. I really believe it's important that we know what we're talking about. We should not say, "Oh, I can just do this," without doing some homework. Mothering should command our full attention. The act of mothering should be civilized and respected and resourceful. After all, we are raising a human being, our offspring, our worldly and spiritual legacy. So if you're not up to the task and you need a pediatrician or another person to tell you to put chemicals into your baby's mouth, then well, I guess, in a way we may even part ways and our conversation is over because that is my philosophy. I'm being a little blunt but I believe it needs saying.

Jendi: So what did you do when your kids got sick?

Joette: Well, the problem with modern pediatrics is that drugs opened a door to overuse. And I believe there are long-term ethical questions to be considered here. But then, worse yet, the door closed behind and slammed shut. And once I recognized that that was the paradigm that pediatricians adhere to and that it was based on, I believe, a cavalier, smearing-on, injecting-in, and tossing-about suspicious chemicals, it was easier from there on because I knew that wasn't what I wanted.

So that was my first step. For crying out loud, I put a lot of time into my whole homemade, organic, pasture-fed foods. I sourced them carefully. I bought directly from farmers. I grew my own. It seemed downright stupid to me to forget all that and suppress a fever with an antibiotic.

So there's a point of view that needs a discussion here, one that's not heard frequently enough, and that is is it possible that we are being systematically altered and manipulated with substances that have never been proven to be safe? I mean, drugs aren't tested on children, mind you, only adults, for obvious reasons. Children are not supposed to be legally tested and at least not in the conventional way. So how scientific is that? In a circuitous way, however, we eventually find out how dangerous these products can be.

And remember, that is what they are, products of an industry. We find out after the drug has been on the market for a few years, sometimes months, sometimes much longer depending on the frequency of the prescription of these drugs, but eventually, we learn that this or that drug is not only doubtful but sometimes can even be lethal. That makes our kids lab rats for an industry. When I recognized this, that's when I begged out. And I realize I haven't answered your question. What was your question again? I get so caught up in this.

Jendi: What about when your kids got sick? What do we do then?

Joette: Oh, okay. Well, around the time that I started to have my children, just before I had them, I started to realize all of this. And so what I wanted to do was to learn another way. And the other way was first, what I learned was naturopathy – clean clothes, warm room, leave your window open, fresh air, high-quality foods made at home, sourced well, stay away from foods that are manufactured, stay away from foods that have ambiguous or unpronounceable ingredients, make everything myself. But when they got sick, I did more than that, of course. That's when I started to learn about homeopathy.

Examples of drugs that are dangerous to us

Jendi: So you learned that the drugs were dangerous to kids and you were trying to raise your kids naturally. Can you give me an example of a drug that is dangerous for kids, maybe something we should avoid?

Joette: Well, in my estimation, they all have dangerous aspects to them. It's just a matter of balancing what is more important. There are certainly times when the dangers of a drug can be put aside for the advantage of something that is more looming. If someone needs surgery, obviously, we need to have anesthesia. It's a risk. Anesthesia is a risk but it's worth taking if the surgery is absolutely necessary and I am a proponent of surgery. I believe surgery can be very valuable. Not to remove tonsils, mind you. That's absolutely ridiculous. There are so many other ways that are easier. But when surgery is truly needed, of course. But that gets us into the question of unnecessary surgery that is performed on our children.

But today, taking birth control pills, giving it to children over the course of years for acne when they reach puberty or because a pregnancy would be an inconvenience so that the child is taught very early on to use something like that to keep from getting pregnant – I'm going to probably turn a lot of people off by saying this – I find that odious. There are so many intelligent, clean alternatives to these kinds of over-the-top methods. There's always an alternative. You just have to ask the right person, you have to ask the right questions, and not someone who's promoting that drug. That person's already convinced that their methods are worthy of touting.

I'll give you an exact example. That famous drug that opened the public's eye, at least when I was growing up because we used to see kids that were so horribly affected, was thalidomide. It was way before your time but it caused limbs to not develop in utero. I used to see children when I was a

child who didn't have fully formed arms or legs or missing fingers. But then there's Darvon, for goodness sakes. It's a ubiquitous drug that's been regularly prescribed for pain up until a few years ago. And its claim to fame is now how brilliantly it was aiding humanity, but now it has countless deaths by cardiac arrest in people who – this is the most important aspect – who had no previous heart disease. It was merrily selling on the market since the late '50s. I think it was like 1957 when Darvon came on the market. And it was recently removed from the market after nearly 60 years of causing these deaths going untraced.

Then there's Accutane that was specifically targeted at teens. It has been linked to serious side effects like birth defects – get this one – thoughts of suicide, depression, and bowel disorders. For goodness sakes, we're talking about acne. It was removed in the market back in 2009 and there was no official recall. You see, it's not that there was a conspiracy of evil out there like some people might suggest. It's simply a market square that says, "Here's a drug if you want to take it. If you don't, then okay, too." But meanwhile, it's up to us as mothers, as members of the public to make sure that we have done our homework. The public for some reason, well, it's not for some reason, it has certainly been directed at us in this way, that there's an erroneous idea that our government is out there protecting us, and it just simply isn't true. It's up to us to determine if we want such a chemical in our or our children's bodies. There are just too many instances to name here but it's worthy of attention of any conscientious parent to ask what kind of thin gruel are we giving our children.

Jendi: So I know a question on my mind, and probably a lot of mothers, is if I stop asking my doctor, how do I know enough to take care of my children?

Trust in your ability to mother

Joette: Well, I've been asked that question many times and I always say, "Do you really have to ask that?" I mean, I realize your question's rhetorical and you're interviewing me but how does anyone know how to make any decisions of substance in their lives? How do you know what house to buy, how to educate, examine? Who should you marry? What church should you go to? Really, for goodness sakes, have we lost our ability to make good decisions? Do we not have the control in our lives to be able to decipher what's best for us and our family?

I worry about what's wrong with the world that the most fundamental work of an adult must be run by another. If we really don't know, ask your mother, ask your grandmother. That's where wisdom lies. Now, there are those circumstances, of course. If they have fallen into lockstep with the lopsided way of dependency on a doctor for every little fever, then start studying. If your mother is saying, "Go to the doctor, go to the doctor, check with the doctor, call the doctor," then you know it's time to start doing some work on your own.

Jendi: I have thought about that and I do believe we are way too dependent on the doctors and what the medical community thinks.

Joette: And not just the doctors. I think many industries in general because they've done a very good job of marketing. I work with clients who hail from all over the world on a day-to-day basis from far-reaching places such as Mongolia, the Philippines, United Arab Emirates, in my fellowships in Kolkata where I've worked with Hindus and Muslims and sheikhs, in the US. I worked with Amish Mennonites, Hasidic Jews, Fundamental Christians, you name it, Conservative Catholics. I've also lived in many areas of the US and attended school in England and have done extensive travel. And I don't say this for any other reason than to say that I've observed a great deal in my 63 years on this Earth. I've gleaned a perspective, I think, that's sweeping.

And what I've consistently noted is something that is going to fly in the face of the narrative of the Western World and that is – it's a sweeping generalization but I can't help but note it time and again – that the greater the formal education of the mother, the less she trusts her ability to mother. And the flip side of it is that the more conservative the family values are, the more involved and less likely the mother is to run to the ubiquitous experts for caring for her children, not just pediatricians but the educators for the child's education.

So for the educated mother, the common horse sense, I believe, has been educated right out of her. I'm not talking about intelligence here. I mean, higher education. Just try for one minute to see if you can convince a mother who has a law degree that she should know how to treat a fever herself without drugs on one hand and a phone to the doctor on the other. It might just throw her into a fit of disgust with those who don't respect the education of doctors with the mere mention of it. And I don't mean to condemn women who are attorneys. In fact, I took the LSATs myself and was on the entry list to join law school many years ago with a real strong desire to join the legal ranks.

But I have to tell you that I have noted this phenomenon playing itself out in educated women. It's prevalent in mothers with demanding careers. They simply don't have the time to learn this stuff. But I say we must make the time. It's that simple. Priorities need to be set with children at the apex and the career well below that. Ultimately, if you have to buck the system, you have to do that, and yes, the feminist manifesto in order to take on this way of thinking. I defiantly taught my children and I still say to them as adults that they would most likely succeed in life if they watched everyone else and what they did and then did the opposite. That's when they're likely to get it right just about a hundred percent of the time.

Jendi: So did they follow your advice?

Joette: Well, unfortunately, my kids don't always listen to their mother. But I'll share something with you when I didn't follow my own advice. My first son was in a school for a few years before I homeschooled him through the rest of grammar school age. And I was being told by his teacher that he should not be taught how to play piano until he was older. It was the philosophy of that particular educational program to relay such intellectual pursuits. Now, my father and my brother are both professional musicians. I have played piano most of my life. I took classical music training in college. So it took some convincing for me to be convinced of this.

But she did. She convinced me for a short time. What the heck was wrong with me? The teacher was almost half my age. I considered her education to be superior to my years of life, my family's values, and more importantly, my undying devotion to my child. Yet, I took her advice for about a year. So I have to admit, I, too, am prone to being sold. I still kick myself today for having fallen for that pitfall. And I do call it pitfall. Soon after, I woke up though and I decided that I was not going to pay attention to that kind of thinking and I took him out of that school, the so-called experts, mind you, and then we started homeschooling from that time on. As mothers, we must step back outside of the situation, gain a common sense perspective. The world is brimming with ideas and lifestyles that are lacking in common horse sense and we must sift through that rubble.

Jendi: It looks like your situation is different. It looks like you are a homeopath and have studied all this so you have confidence to take care of your kids that the rest of us don't have. So was it your training that gave you the guts to take on curing your family yourself without a doctor?

"I've had enough!"

Joette: No. Actually, it was the other way around, Jendi. I knew nothing about medicine, even alternative medicine until I decided it was important enough to learn. I didn't learn about homeopathy until I got sick at the hands of modern medical treatments – antibiotics and those god-forsaken birth control pills. That's when I said, "Okay, I've had enough." And that was just about the time my husband and I were married and we started looking into having a family. And that's when it became crystal clear that if you want something done right, you have to do it yourself.

Jendi: I'm sure there are naysayers that will say, "Well, your kids probably weren't as sick as others and that's why you could handle it."

Joette: My kids were no different than anybody else. They got the usual coughs, colds, croup, stomach flus, bronchitis, ear infections, cold sores, food intolerance, you name it, strep throat, injuries galore. I have never been completely opposed to seeing doctors. I just knew I could handle most any condition that came our way. And the more I learned homeopathy, I preferred it to not be interfered with, thank you very much. But if something serious happened, of course, I would take them to a doctor, something that was beyond my understanding. Certainly, I wasn't going to be foolish about this. We lived on a small farm. We raised some chickens and had a couple of goats for a while. We had bees and we not only didn't depend on others but we rarely even needed a veterinarian because I learned enough about livestock and tending for them as well with homeopathy. But it was a process.

I believe that we Americans have been hoodwinked into believing that all germs are bad. And the truth is that exposure to bees, germs, etc., and eschewing the stifling process of employing drugs is what actually keeps our children healthy. There is a beneficial purpose to acute illnesses and so I wasn't afraid of them. I really believed it was important

that my kids got chickenpox, that they got the flu, they got colds. I celebrated it when they got it. Stumbling on these fundamental discoveries, I sighed a sigh of not just relief but belief. I believe in myself that I could do this myself and then I set off and started to work on it so that I could prove to myself that I was worthy of it. So I did it the other way around.

Jendi: I really love those ideas and I really want to do them in my own family. And I do think we're often worried about pleasing others, but of course, our first duty is to protect our family and so until that is accomplished, nothing else matters.

Joette: Well, we have to aggressively seek answers in our lives. They're not just going to come to us. And I find that most of the answers that come too quickly are often planted there by media, marketing, etc. I used to be an account executive for NBC back in the 1980s. That means I was a member of the sales and marketing department. I know marketing when I see it because I used to write the local TV commercials. So I can identify motives and who's behind what we read and hear very easily. I wish that everybody could. In fact, I assume many people do, and yes, I was one of them. And what I see in media is that they, the media themselves, are the stenographers for the government and health agencies, the self-promoting medical organizations and out-of-control big pharma.

So when I got out of that field and began raising my family, I used my experiences as my guide. Far too often, what I witness in the general public is apparent indifference, kind of an injurious way of living, a way of thinking that is far too accepting of status quo. And I believe that leads to mediocrity, which is the one word that scares the wits out of me. Those who are listening today are certainly not of that ilk. Otherwise, they'd be watching a reality TV show instead of learning how to take care of their families, or at least

considering what I have to offer here.

Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Teresa believed in the powers of homeopathy

We need to get back to traditional values of commitment to our craft, whether it be as a parent, a grandparent, an engineer, a pianist, no matter, a commitment to excellence and not depending on others' opinions. That's why I look to those people in the world who have made a mark that lives beyond their time on Earth for their inspiration. And since I have a [unintelligible – 00:22:35] feeling towards India, I'll use two of my favorite Indian citizens – Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Teresa. I saw evidence of both of these two great minds during my time in Kolkata. There's evidence of them everywhere in statues and bulletin boards, etc. And as a Roman Catholic, I appreciate that Mother Teresa and the Missionaries of Charity depended on homeopathy and treated the poorest of the poor in Kolkata with homeopathic medicines.

Jendi: So it's a known fact that Mother Teresa and Gandhi used homeopathy?

Joette: Well, I don't know that Gandhi administered homeopathy but he held it in high regard. He is quoted as saying – I've got this quote right here – "Homeopathy cures a larger percentage of cases than any other form of treatment and is beyond a doubt safer and more economical." And yes, the sisters were not fully trained homeopaths but they knew how to use the medicines and administered them to the sick and dying. Dr. Prasanta Banerji, the wonderful man who trained me in his methods, knew and personally acknowledged that to me.

Jendi: The wide world has a lot to offer us if we seek for it.

Joette: Yeah, there's no doubt. There's no doubt. And the reason I mentioned this is because it demonstrates that homeopathy is so very poorly underrepresented in the US today, yet highly valued in the rest of the world. In fact, it's

valued everywhere but the US and Canada and oddly enough, the communist countries, too. But more importantly, I share this because what I have unearthed are what I believe the answers to so many homeopathic protocols that can be learned by families to treat themselves. These protocols take away the trial and error found in both classical homeopathy and even what an essential oil or an herb can provide. I love to say, "Here's how you do it. Here's the condition, here's the remedy, here's the potency, and here's where you can purchase it if you don't have it. And now, this is how it's employed."

Jendi: And I love that you share so much free information on your blog and I love to go there and search for something that is bothering my family instead of going to the drugstore. And if I don't find something right away, I try to pick a synonym or another way to describe it and search that way. So I was looking up acne for my daughter. I didn't find a lot so I put in pimples and it brought up some information about that. And I reference it to other people. "Oh, I learned about this on JoetteCalabrese.com," or "I was reading about this on JoetteCalabrese.com." So it's a great resource.

Joette: Yeah. I'm glad you're using it. And that's the way to do it. You may have to come up with synonyms.

Jendi: Do you have any parting words for us today?

Be a defiant mother

Joette: Well, actually, I just have one. My parting word is "No". The most powerful word in a woman's vocabulary is no. You can always say yes later but start out with no first. "No candy right now, honey." And more importantly, "No, thanks, doc. I need to give this some thought." "No, not today, doc. I want to discuss it with my husband." "No, not Tylenol for fever. Thank you very much." When it comes to our posturing, dealing with health and welfare, this includes dealing with education administrators, too, by the way, my general rule is

no.

Don't be a good girl. Be a good mother. Be prepared to fight to the finish for your family. No, don't be a compliant parent. Be a self-respecting, well-informed force. Be defiant. Unapologetically, take control of your destiny. Instead of bumping around the bottom in mediocrity, get to the top of your game. Go ahead and tuck away some of the protocols and the homeopathic tricks of the trade into your hip pocket, then take your family by the hand and face the opposite direction from the rest of the world and that's when you say, "Yes, yes, I can do this myself." That's when you're likely to get it right.

Jendi: Thank you so much, Joette, for all your encouragement.

Thank you for listening to this podcast with Joette Calabrese. If you liked it, please share it with your friends. To learn more and find out if homeopathy is a good fit in your health strategy, visit joettecalabrese.com and schedule a free 15-minute conversation.